Data show concern for FBI,

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WASHINGTON – Previously classified documents on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy almost 30 years ago reflect great governmental concern about the reputation of the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI. The pages also display an earlier zeal for declaring documents secret.

Page after page of classified testimony before the Warren Commission reveals that panel members were worried that the CIA or FBI might be tainted even by rumors that Lee Harvey Oswald had been linked to either agency. In its final report, the commission ruled that Oswald, a wanderer who once renounced his US citizenship for the Soviet Union, had acted alone.

At one point in the Warren Commission's deliberations, John J. McCloy says of the two agencies, "I can't say that I've run into a fellow comparable to Oswald, but I have run into some very limited mentalities in the CIA and FBI." The formerly classified document reports laughter from among the other commission members.

There are also letters and memos from then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and former CIA officials debunking any notion that Oswald was either a paid informer or overseas operative. The Warren Commission agreed.

Robert Gates, a director of the CIA in the Bush administration, was puzzled by the long delay in releasing the documents. He cited it yesterday as one reason that conspiracy zealots are still at work on the slaying of Kennedy.

"It made no sense to classify as secret such things as newspaper clippings" said Gates, adding that he was prepared to release the CIA-related documents himself last year if Congress had not finally acted to do so.

Public opinion surveys show that large numbers of Americans resist the single-assassin theory and doubt the findings of the Warren Commission, a distinguished panel headed by then-Chief Justice Earl Warren.

"It's much like the Lincoln assassination," said Gates. "When you have a president so beloved, so admired as Kennedy, it is too great a burden to accept that a single individual could commit such a monstrous act. You don't hear many conspiracies about the McKinley assassination, do you?"

The files from the CIA show the agency carefully tracked every rumor that a visit to Mexico by Oswald a month before the slaying had some

CIA image

conspiratorial tie to Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

Also among the documents was a secondhand report made 14 years after the assassination from a Russian emigre who told an FBI agent that another Russian, Pavel Golachev, had told him of a boast by Oswald that he would get rich because "I will kill the president." Golachev told the friend that he thought Oswald was joking but was angry when he said it.

There also was an eerie reminder in the files of Oswald's attempt to contact then-Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, who was riding in the presidential limousine with Kennedy and seriously wounded in Dallas. Oswald wanted to his discuss his dishonorable discharge from the Marines.

Oswald wrote Connally in 1962 to protest "my belated dishonorable discharge" because he thought Connally, a fellow Texan from Fort Worth, was still secretary of the Navy.

Connally, who was campaigning at the time for governor, wrote Oswald on campaign stationery that he was no longer in Washington but would forward the letter to the present secretary of the Navy. Connally died earlier this year.

One lesser-known theory was that Oswald intended to shoot Connally because he thought his letter of protest had been ignored.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY
"Like the Lincoln assassination"